

# USDA *news*

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## If You Work For USDA, A "LincPass" Is About To Be A Part Of Your Future

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**R**eflective of the minor annoyances of life in the 21st century, we shudder at the daily traffic gridlock, we try to block out intrusive cell-phone conversations, and we roll our eyes with dissatisfaction when we look at our passport photo, our driver's license photo—and maybe also the photo on our USDA identification card.

Well, if you don't like the pic on the official USDA ID you currently use, you're in luck. The whole USDA ID card itself is about to go through a major transformation, and putting a new picture of the employee on the new ID card is just one part of that change.

By October 27, 2008 virtually all USDA employees, located at headquarters and field locations across the country and around the world, are to be issued new USDA employee ID cards, called the "LincPass."

Here's why that's happening, and here's what those new cards are to feature.

"The short answer as to why it's happening? HSPD-12 mandated it," noted **Owen Unangst**, the Identity and Access Management Project Manager with the Office of the Chief Information Officer in Ft. Collins, Colo. He was referring to "Homeland Security Presidential Directive

12," which is dated Aug. 27, 2004 and which lays out a policy for a "Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors." "The long answer is that in this post-9/11 era, we need newer, better, standardized, more comprehensive, and more secure employee ID cards, which offer more features and more capabilities, to further protect the security of our federal employees, our federal facilities, and our federal computers, no matter where they are situated."

The USDA version of this governmentwide "smart card," with its variety of new features, is called "LincPass" in honor of President **Abraham Lincoln**, who founded the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862. A slightly different use of the word was included in an e-mail message, sent from Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration **Gilbert Smith**, which was dated June 20, 2007 and titled "LincPass: the New Federal Identification Card Pilot Program Is Coming to USDA." In that e-mail message, sent to USDA employees in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, Smith noted that "Your identity will be 'linked' to the card..."

**Rick Holman**, Chief of the Physical Security Division in the Office of Security Services, explained that all USDA LincPasses—for all USDA



"My LincPass has all the latest features, including a contact computer chip—but in my photo I look fairly solemn, since we're not supposed to smile when our digital pic is taken," explains **Rick Holman** (right), Chief of the Physical Security Division in the Office of Security Services, as he and OSS senior personnel security specialist **Arviet Thorpe** check out Holman's LincPass. They are standing in front of a USDA LincPass "Activation Station." The "LincPass," with its several new features, is USDA's version of a new governmentwide "smart card." It will serve as the new ID card for virtually all USDA employees, located at headquarters and field locations across the country and around the world. Note the story on this page.—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH**

employees, irrespective of office locations at headquarters or field sites—will share the same features: they will be 2" x 3.5", will be multicolored, will include the USDA employee's name, plus his/her identification as an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will include identifying data including height, color of hair, and color of eyes, will include the card's expiration date, and will include the official USDA logo. In addition, a contact computer chip will be imbedded in the card that will hold the following items of data to verify the cardholder's identity: a fingerprint 'algorithm'; a digital head shot of the cardholder; the cardholder's unique ID—which is *not* the cardhold-

er's Social Security number; and information—called "PKI Certificates"—which provides authentication, encryption, and a digital signature, all of which are unique to that employee.

"USDA employees," Unangst explained, "will *insert* their LincPass to automatically access their office computer, and *scan* their LincPass to automatically access their USDA facility." He noted that USDA employees who use government *laptops* will be required to begin using that LincPass by March 2008 to access their laptops. USDA's plan is to complete implementation of LincPass access to USDA office laptops by September 2008. All other USDA employees will be *continued on pg. 2...*



# Chuck Conner *Acting Secretary of Agriculture*

**D**ear Fellow Employees,  
On September 20th I was honored to become the Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It was such

a privilege for me to work with former Secretary **Mike Johanns** for the past several years. I knew him when he was governor of Nebraska and it was an honor to serve here at his side. He was willing to make a lot of tough decisions and he was a terrific advocate for farmers, ranchers, and for the Department of Agriculture.

I am honored to serve in this post. I will also share with you that I am well prepared for it, largely because Mike Johanns and I worked as partners on everything from policy decisions to personnel issues.

Your dedication and commitment have helped to make the transition in leadership seamless. And I know, in the future, whether it is me or someone else serving as Secretary of Agriculture, your support will continue because you are professionals, you care about American agriculture and about the diverse mission of this great department.

The work we do each day touches the lives of every American.

Because of you, more than 30 million children are served school lunches every day. Because of you, we are able to provide responsible stewardship for more than 190 million acres of national forests. Because of you, nearly 600,000 households in 40 states are able to access broadband technologies in rural areas, giving them a better quality of life and access to modern conveniences. Because of you, the United States enjoys the safest food supply in the world. Because of you, U.S. agricultural exports are setting records and U.S. animal health is protected.

When I was growing up in Indiana, my dream was always to work on the family farm with my brother, **Mike**. Life has led me on a different course—one this farm boy never would have anticipated. I am humbled by the opportunity to lead what is truly a remarkable team here at USDA. In the coming months, I will continue to rely on your support as we urge Congress to adopt our farm bill proposals, open markets for agricultural exports, ensure our nutrition programs operate effectively and reach those in need, and maintain the safest food supply in the world. Together, we will continue to provide the best possible service to the American people. ■

## "LincPass"...continued from pg. 1

required to use their LincPass, to access their office *desktop* computers, by October 2009. Finally, by October 2011 all USDA employees will be required to use the "scan" feature of their LincPass in order to enter applicable USDA facilities.

Unangst said that each LincPass will initially cost about \$82. Individual program agencies and staff offices are paying that cost for their respective employees.

**Susan Gulbranson**, Chief of the Personnel and Document Security Division in OSS, added that program agencies and staff offices are to also pay the cost for the background investigation—if there is not a 'BI' already on the employee's record—which each LincPass holder must complete before issuance of that card. She pointed out that if an employee's agency can produce—or otherwise verify the existence of—an official document reflecting that he/she has already completed a BI, that employee does not have to complete a new BI. "About 70 percent of USDA employees are in that situation," she affirmed, "so they won't have to complete another BI." She advised, however, that employees who have completed a BI more than 15 years ago may not be able to verify that, since the Office of Personnel Management is no longer keeping records such as this that are older than 15 years.

"Those background investigations," Unangst said, "generally take the form of a National Agency Check With Inquiries—or NACI—and it costs about \$100 each."

Gulbranson explained that, to initiate the

required background investigation, an employee's servicing personnel office or servicing security office will contact him/her about filling out the proper form, depending on the degree of sensitivity of that employee's position. The forms in question are the Standard Form 85 ("Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions"), the SF 85P ("Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions"), and the SF 86 ("Questionnaire for National Security Positions").

She added that, following satisfactory completion of the background investigation process, employees will be directed to an "Enrollment Station." There they are to provide two forms of identification—including at least one government-issued photo ID such as a passport or a state driver's license—which will be scanned into the HSPD-12 system. The employee will then have a digital photo taken and will be fingerprinted. "To protect the privacy of a person's fingerprints," explained Unangst, "the fingerprint data is converted via a 'hash' function—sort of like a mathematical algorithm—into a long string of random-looking letters and numbers."

Holman said that employees at USDA field locations will be directed to "established Enrollment Stations" which will be available around the country providing those particular services.

"Initial turnaround time is expected to be about two weeks to receive your LincPass," affirmed Holman. As currently set up, the employee will then return to the "Enrollment Station" to pick up his/her LincPass and then



*This closeup of **Rick Holman's** LincPass card shows the gold-colored contact computer chip that is imbedded in the bottom of the card, and that is a standard feature on all USDA LincPasses.—PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH*

activate it.

Holman said that 600 USDA employees, from 6 program agencies and staff offices at USDA headquarters in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, participated in a pilot program to obtain their LincPass card. "The pilot began in July, and we anticipate that all 600 pilot participants will have received their LincPass cards by late fall," he noted.

Since July USDA has been offering briefings to employees at headquarters and field locations on the LincPass card. Holman said that employees can get more information by clicking on <http://lincpass.usda.gov>

"My fellow USDA employees will want to know that this LincPass card will open up whole new vistas of security," Holman underscored. "But, by the same token, we employees will need to mega-protect this card just like we would our own personal credit cards. So be alert, be careful, and be on guard at all times with your LincPass." ■



# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*Following the departure of Secretary **Mike Johanns**, Acting Secretary **Chuck Conner** immediately began work managing beef trade issues, food safety import issues, a series of domestic meat recalls, and farm bill development. On October 1, Health and Human Services Secretary **Michael Leavitt** and Secretary Conner hosted a meeting at USDA to gather recommendations from the public for an Import Safety Action Plan that will be released in November. In 2007, the U.S. will import \$2 trillion worth of products coming from 25,000 importers through 300 ports, land border crossings, and other ports of entry. In addition, Secretary Conner pressed Congress to approve Free Trade Agreements with Korea, Panama, Peru, and Colombia. Secretary Conner also expressed optimism about a new farm bill. "I am confident we are going to have a farm bill that the President can sign, and sign with enthusiasm," he said. And he led USDA employees in mourning the loss of **Steven Thomas (Tom) Stefani**, a Forest Service employee on voluntary assignment with the Foreign Agricultural Service, who died in Afghanistan.*

## Free Trade Agreements:

FTAs with Korea, Panama, Peru, and Colombia would generate new exports for U.S. producers as well as allow them to compete. Currently the four countries in question have many barriers to imports of U.S. farm products, while the U.S. has virtually no barriers to their products. An FTA with Korea would allow duty-free access to \$1.6 billion worth of U.S. farm products immediately. FTAs with Panama, Peru, and Colombia

would allow more than half of our current U.S. farm exports to enter those countries duty-free. Although the U.S. remains committed to improving worldwide market access for U.S. farm products through the Doha Development Round, other countries are pursuing FTAs and edging the U.S. out of those markets. For example, for the past two years U.S. lemon shipments to Korea totaled \$4 million. But Chile recently signed an FTA with Korea that has already captured 10 percent of the lemon market. "Don't doubt for one minute that the Chileans are going to be content with 10 percent of the market share," Conner said. "Our American farmers and ranchers stand to lose more of these markets if Congress fails to ratify these agreements."

## USDA Buys Animal ID Tags:

USDA has contracted with three manufacturers to purchase 1.5 million radio frequency identification ear tags. The ear tags will be used specifically for USDA state-federal cooperative disease control and eradication efforts, such as bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis, and will be distributed in geographic areas which are determined to be of increased risk for disease outbreak or spread. Using these tags for existing programs will make it easier for state and federal officials to trace production animals to their source in the event of a disease outbreak or animal health emergency.

**World Food Prize:** Acting Secretary Chuck Conner praised this year's World Food Prize winner, **Philip Nelson** of Purdue University, during a ceremony in Iowa. Nelson won the prize for inventing a new way to preserve food. As Secretary Conner put it, "His aseptic sys-



Acting Secretary **Chuck Conner** checks out all the fruits and veggies on his lunch tray as he gets ready to have lunch with a kindergarten student at Neabsco Elementary School in Woodbridge, Va., on Oct. 17. He was visiting the school to celebrate National School Lunch Week and to recognize that school as one of 46 elementary schools in Prince William County, Va., that had achieved a "Gold School" rating in USDA's "HealthierUS School Challenge" program. According to **Stan Garnett**, Director of the National School Lunch Program in the Food and Nutrition Service, in order to be a "Gold School," schools must offer a lunch program, nutrition education, and physical education that meet standards set by USDA. In addition, schools must have at least 70 percent of their students participating in USDA's school lunch program.—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH**

tems have turned the holds of ocean-going cargo ships into giant zip-lock bags that can be safely stuffed with millions of gallons of processed tomatoes, orange juice, or other products. This invention has helped developing nations export processed fruits and vegetables at a reasonable cost, while ensuring the products are safe and wholesome." The aseptic system locks out light and air, seals in nutrients, and need not be refrigerated. The best known containers are juice boxes.

## Personally Identifiable Information (PII):

On October 24 USDA formally launched its Department-wide campaign to alert employees about the need to protect what is called "Personally Identifiable Information" or PII. That generally refers to information which is maintained by a USDA agency about an individual, including USDA customers and USDA

employees. That information may include details of financial transactions between a customer and the Department; such unique information as a Social Security number and a date or place of birth which could be used to trace an individual's identity; and other personal information, including medical or criminal history, which is linkable to a particular individual. The campaign has included providing USDA employees with e-mail notices, video presentations, voice mail messages, and information on USDA's website, **www.usda.gov**, all emphasizing the importance of taking measures to protect PII. One such tool to accomplish that is USDA's upcoming use, by virtually all employees, of the "LincPass" ID card, which is described in a story on page one.

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

# We Honor Our Award-Winning USDA Achievers

by Charlene Baker  
RD Human Resources Staff

**U**SDA honored a number of its employees, for their outstanding achievements, at its 60th Annual USDA Honor Awards Ceremony, which took place Oct. 11, 2007 in the Jefferson Auditorium of the South Building at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

USDA honor awards that were presented at the Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony were awarded to 27 recipients, including 5 individuals and 22 groups, with 411 USDA employee awardees in total.

At the ceremony, Acting Secretary **Chuck Conner** delivered the keynote address. "The work you do each day does indeed, ladies and gentlemen, touch the lives of every American," he told the audience. "USDA employees consistently prove their dedication to serving our stakeholders. Today we are gathered to honor some of our employees who have provided truly exceptional service to the American people. The honorees today have gone above and beyond the call of duty, simply put."

"You have chosen to work for USDA, and for that I simply say 'thank you'," he added. "And I offer special thanks and congratulations to all of our award recipients today... We celebrate with you, we celebrate your accomplishments, the people of America celebrate your accomplishments."

**Anita Adkins**, USDA's Performance Management Program Manager with the Office of Human Capital Management, said that the award nominations had been submitted through their respective subcabinet officials for concurrence. The nominations were then due for submission to OHCM personnel by June 29, 2007 for procedural review. Ultimately 27 nomina-

tions, which included 5 individuals and 22 groups, were forwarded to the Office of the Secretary for ultimate approval.

"This program, which was created in 1947, recognizes the highest level of employee achievement," underscored **Cecilia Matthews**, USDA's Employee Recognition Program Manager in OHCM. "These Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards presented by USDA."

## **The five Individuals receiving USDA Honor Awards included:**

*For Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America:* **David Grahn** (Office of the General Counsel), Arlington, Va.

*For Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply:* **Marvin Grubman** (Agricultural Research Service), Greenport, N.Y.

Washington, DC.

*For Heroism and Emergency Response:* **Paul McKellips** (Farm Service Agency), Washington, DC.

## **The 22 Groups—which included over 400 USDA members—receiving USDA Honor Awards included:**

*For Enhancing International Competitiveness of American Agriculture:* the Audit, Review and Compliance Branch (Agricultural Marketing Service), Fredericksburg, Va., **James Riva**, Group Leader; and the BSE Risk Status Dossier Team (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), Washington, DC, **John Greifer**, Group Leader.

*For Enhancing the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics:* the 2005 Hurricane Recovery Effort (FSA), Alexandria, La., **Willie Cooper**, Group Leader; the Diversity Outreach Team for the

*For Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America:* the Multi-Family Housing Prepayment Settlement Team (Rural Development), Washington, DC, **Laurence Anderson** and **Alicia Peden**, Group Leaders; and the Social-Economic Benefit Analysis System Working Group (RD), Washington, DC and Columbia, Mo., **William Hagy** and **Thomas Johnson**, Group Leaders.

*For Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply:* the Avian Influenza Working Group (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Washington, DC, **Perfecto Santiago**, Group Leader; the Food Safety Education for At-Risk Audiences Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Susan Conley** and **Stan Hazan**, Group Leaders; the Irradiation and Indian Mango Approval Team (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Alan Green** and **Paul Gadh**, Group Leaders; the Melamine Response Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Terri Nintemann**, Group Leader; and the Salmonella Sampling Coordination Group (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Sean Altekruze**, Group Leader.

*For Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health:* the Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Team (Food and Nutrition Service), Alexandria, Va., **Judy Wilson** and **Alice White**, Group Leaders; and the Loving Your Family... Initiative Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Jane Mandell** and **Alice Lockett**, Group Leaders.

*For Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment:* the Public Lands Partnership of Delta, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties, Colorado (Forest Service), Delta, Colo., **Mary Chapman**, Group Leader; and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), Washington, DC, **Abigail Kimbell** and **Dale Bosworth** (retired), Group Leaders.

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## Individual Honor Award Winners



D. Grahn



M. Grubman



J. Beyer



M. Yost



P. McKellips

*For Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment:* **John Beyer** (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Fresno, Ca.

*For Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights:* **Michael Yost** (Foreign Agricultural Service),

Washington, DC. **2007 Census of Agriculture** (National Agricultural Statistics Service), Washington, DC, **Ray Garibay**, Group Leader; and the Midwestern Regional Office, Business Practices and Resident Agent Units (Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration), Des Moines, Iowa, **Bryce Wilke**, Group Leader.



## USDA Spotlights Its "Unsung Heroes"

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**U**SDA recognized 12 employees as "Unsung Heroes" during its recent observance of Public Service Recognition Week.

According to **Farook Sait**, Special Counsel for the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and President of the Organization of Professional Employees, U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA), the purpose of the "Unsung Hero" designation is to identify those employees who have been "unusually dedicated and efficient and had a positive attitude."

He noted that nominees as "Unsung Heroes" are based on actual "hands-on" activities rather than on supervisory or managerial efforts. "However," he added, "all USDA employees were eligible to be nominated."

**Holly Hayes Hambley**, Executive Director of OPEDA and a retired research leader with the Agricultural Research Service, said that the idea for an "Unsung Heroes" contest was developed in 1987 by a group of six representatives of professional organizations in the Department. This is the 20th year of the contest, which was conducted USDA-wide. She noted that following a Departmentwide solicitation, over 50 employees were nominated by fellow USDA employees. The final selection was made in April by a team of USDA officials. Related photos can be found at [www.opeda.net](http://www.opeda.net)

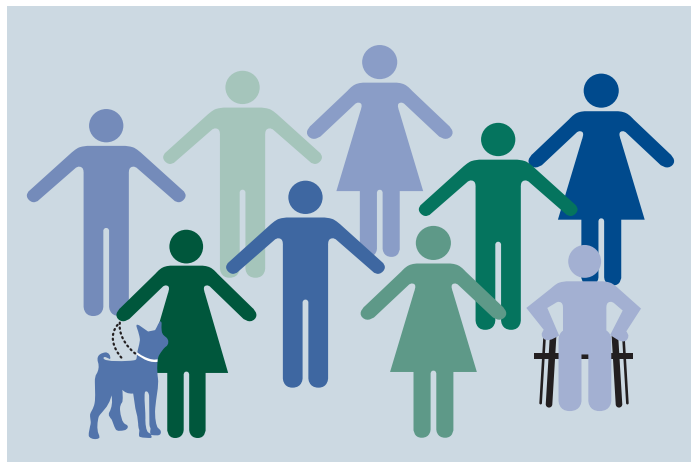
Hambley added that OPEDA, which was founded in 1929, is the largest and oldest professional organization at USDA.

### USDA's "Unsung Heroes" for 2007 include:

❶ **Pat Basu**, a special assistant within the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Office of Public Health and Science, who

has served since 2006 as president of the Asian Pacific American Network in Agriculture (APANA), a USDA employee organization, and who helped to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between FSIS and APANA to assist the agency and its Asian Pacific American employees in creating a more productive and harmonious workplace.

❷ **Steven Brammer**, a staff attorney in the Civil Rights Litigation Division of the Office of the General Counsel, who is considered a vigorous advocate for preventing workplace conflicts and who is known for the training he provides to managers and supervisors at USDA on that general subject as well as on su-



pervisory responsibilities under applicable civil rights laws.

❸ **Rhonda Davis**, Director of the Planning and Performance Division in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, who is known for the positive spirit and energy she has contributed during her service in several positions of increasing managerial responsibility in USDA's civil rights mission area.

❹ **Curt Deville**, Director of the Equal Opportunity Staff in the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, who was the prime force behind the creation of the Civil Rights Directors Management Council at USDA in 1984, and who, since then, has provided leader-

ship to that Council as it has conducted numerous civil rights and diversity training conferences, around the country, for USDA civil rights staffers, USDA employees in general, and customers of USDA programs and services.

❺ **Dwight Gadsby**, a resource economist with the Economic Research Service, who has been in the forefront of providing Resource Conservation & Development-focused economic analyses in support of the Department's efforts to aid rural America, as agriculturally related environmental problems in rural communities continue to provide challenges within those geographic areas across the country.

❻ **Janet Head**, an equal employment specialist with the Farm Service Agency's Kansas City EEO/Civil Rights Staff, who developed an EEO Tracking and Reporting System for the agency that included the capability of providing required report data for FSA's state and field offices, in order to more accurately measure EEO compliance at the state and field office levels.

❼ **Crystal Leonetti**, the district conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Anchorage and the Alaska Native Liaison for the agency throughout Alaska, who has been serving as NRCS's first and only employee responsible for interacting with Alaska's first-ever Tribal Conservation Dis-

trict, based in Tyonek, Alaska, and who developed a 3-day course, titled "Working Effectively with Alaska Natives," designed for NRCS employees in Alaska, to help them better understand Alaska native history, land complexities, and Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut cultures.

❽ **Jane Tesch**, a loan specialist with the Rural Development State Office in Bismarck, N.D., who has been described as "the glue that holds the North Dakota Rural Development Business and Community Program Team together" because of the degree of customer-friendly professional assistance she provides to her colleagues and to customers of that RD program in North Dakota.

❾ **Pat Tippet**, [then] a senior ethics specialist with the Office of Ethics, who developed most of the Standard Operating Procedures utilized by OE, and who also developed several of OE's 20 computer-based ethics training modules.

❿ **Crystal Tolar**, a senior EEO specialist with the Food and Nutrition Service's Civil Rights Division, who is considered an accomplished trainer and presenter and, as such, has been requested "by name" to make civil rights presentations, for FNS, at training conferences and workshops around the country before the National Association for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

⓫ **Nicole Tousley**, [then] the Deputy Director of the Civil Rights Staff in the Forest Service, who, through her innovative development of data reports and system changes in the database, was instrumental in improving the ability of the Forest Service to more accurately measure the timeliness of formal and informal EEO complaint processing beyond Departmental requirements.

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# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**John Crew** is the Director of the Office of Operations.

From August 2002 until his selection for this position Crew served as the Deputy Area Director of the Agricultural Research Service's North Atlantic Area, based in Wyndmoor, Pa. He was the Administrative Officer for that Area from 1988-2002.

Crew served as the Administrative Officer for the Bureau of Land Management's District Office in Las Vegas from 1985-88, after having been an Administrative Officer trainee with BLM in Carson City, Nev., from 1984-85. From 1977-84 he worked as a forester with BLM in Tillamook, Ore. He began his federal career as a forestry technician with the Forest Service in Placerville, Calif. in 1976.

**Priscilla Carey**, the previous Director of the Office of Operations, retired from that position following 32 years of federal service. ■



**Darryl Earnest** is the Deputy Administrator for Cotton in the Agricultural Marketing

Service.

From January 2005 until his selection for this position Earnest served as Acting Deputy Administrator for Cotton in AMS. He served as AMS's Associate Deputy Administrator for Cotton from 2001-05, operating out of Memphis from 2002-05 as he assumed the management responsibilities for all cotton-oriented branch and field operations for the agency.

Earnest served as Head of Engineering in the Grading Branch within AMS's Cotton

Program from 1993-2000. From 1991-93 he worked as a general engineer in the Cotton Program's Classing Office in Memphis. He began his federal career as a general engineer with AMS in the Cotton Program's Classing Office in Greenwood, Ms., in 1990.

**Norma McDill**, AMS's previous Deputy Administrator for Cotton, retired from that position following over 41 years of service with USDA. ■



**LeAnn Oliver** is the Deputy Administrator for Cooperative Programs in Rural Development's Business and Co-

operative Programs.

Before joining USDA, from January 2006 until her selection for this position Oliver served as the Acting Deputy Associate Deputy Administrator for Entrepreneurial Development at the U.S. Small Business Administration. During that time she was also the senior advisor for the Office of Entrepreneurial Development at SBA from 2005-06. From 2000-05 she served as SBA's Deputy Associate Administrator for Financial Assistance.

Oliver was the Director of the Program Development Division at SBA from 1995-2000, after having been the Acting Director of SBA's Office of Rural Affairs and Economic Development from 1994-95. She began her federal career as a Presidential Management Intern with SBA in 1980.

**Bobbie Purcell**, the previous Deputy Administrator for Cooperative Programs in RD's Business and Cooperative Programs, is now the Director of USDA's Office of Human Capital Management. ■



**Eric Steiner** is the Deputy Administrator for Special Nutrition Programs in the Food and Nutrition Service.

Before joining USDA, from September 2003 until his appointment to this position Steiner served as a professional staff member on the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, where he concentrated on issues involving domestic nutrition assistance, international food aid, and international agricultural research.

Steiner served as a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow with the Congressional Hunger Center in Washington, DC from 2002-03. In that capacity he concentrated on improving USDA's Summer Food Service Program in Milwaukee, Wis., and also on analyzing global population growth, available cropland, and available water resources as measures of global food security.

**Kate Houston**, the previous Deputy Administrator for Special Nutrition Programs in FNS, is now the Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. ■



**I**t started out as a suggestion to encourage some competition among USDA employees in

central North Dakota, who planned to participate in a local blood drive. It ended up with the governor of North Dakota signing a proclamation declaring "USDA Week"—throughout the entire state—for a 5-day period this past July.

Now, *that's* a big jump. How did it happen?

"Well," laughed **Cal Thorson**, "our USDA planning committee had a number of very creative members. They kept thinking of new ideas, so we kept adding ideas to our list—and the next thing we knew, we'd developed a pretty sizable game plan."

Thorson, a technical information specialist with the Agricultural Research Service's Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan, N.D., served as the overall coordinator of this undertaking, which the planning committee titled "Team USDA Week." That committee was composed of employees who work in USDA offices in either Mandan or Bismarck, two cities located on opposite sides of the Missouri River in central North Dakota. Those employees work for ARS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Forest Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.

"Our committee, which began meeting in March, came up with several specific objectives for our 'Team USDA Week'," he explained. "For example, we wanted to increase public awareness, among the residents of the entire state, of the contributions that USDA in general and its employees in particular make to the community. We also wanted to enhance the perceived value of working for USDA in North Dakota, not only by our current employees but also by would-be employees. We wanted to strengthen positive work relationships, communication, and support both within our respective agencies and across organizational lines. And we wanted to support this local blood drive."

Accordingly, committee mem-

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Flanked by a Rural Development display (right) and an Agricultural Research Service display (left), four Farm Service Agency employees confer in front of an FSA display (center). The four—Burleigh County, N.D. program technician **JoDee Bohn** (left), Morton County, N.D. program technician **Melissa Sabot** (behind Bohn), County Executive Director for Burleigh County **Jean Schoenhard** (in striped shirt), and County Executive Director for Morton County **Linda Urlacher** (back to camera)—are attending a picnic for USDA employees who work in central North Dakota. The picnic, held on July 12, was part of “USDA Week”—July 9-13, 2007. “USDA Week” was proclaimed in writing by the governor of North Dakota and was recognized throughout the state.—  
**PHOTO BY DENNIS RODIN**

bers did some research. For instance, Thorson contacted **Dennis Kaplan**, Deputy Director of Budget, Legislative, and Regulatory Systems in USDA's Office of Budget and Program Analysis. Kaplan provided him with statistics showing that over 900 residents of North Dakota work for the Department and that USDA contributes over \$1.5 billion annually to the economy of North Dakota, through such expenditures as employee salaries and benefits and USDA's various programs and services within the state.

Committee members then planned what

they referred to as a “media blitz” to promote their objectives. “We got on the schedule of various TV and radio community programs that broadcast throughout most parts of North Dakota,” explained **Arlis Waltos**, the FS executive secretary in the agency's Dakota Prairie Grasslands Supervisor's Office in Bismarck. “Then during the week of July 9 to 13 at least one employee, representing our eight participating USDA agencies, was interviewed about such topics as USDA in general and how it services the citizens of North Dakota.” They also got coverage in *The Bismarck Tribune*, their local daily newspaper, and the *Farm and Ranch Guide*, a regional newsmagazine.

In addition, **Clare Carlson**, the North Dakota State Director for Rural Development, based in Bismarck, contacted the office of North Dakota Governor **John Hoeven**, suggesting that the week of July 9-13 be declared “USDA Week” throughout the state. “I got positive feedback from his office,” Carlson recalled, “so I volunteered to draft the language for the proclamation.”

In keeping with the style of a proclamation, Carlson drafted five sentences beginning with “Whereas,” followed by language which, in effect, promoted many of the committee's objectives. The last sentence read “*NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim July 9-13, 2007, USDA WEEK in the state of North Dakota.*” Hoeven ultimately signed the document, in a ceremonial proclamation signing held on June 12 that was attended by USDA executives from throughout the state.

Finally, the committee developed plans for a USDA blood drive to be held at several area locations. **Lisa Lund**, the NRCS management analyst at the agency's state office in Bismarck, NRCS planning specialist

**Doug Van Daalen**, and NRCS editor **Lynette Lennick** coordinated NRCS's participation in the blood drive. Lund noted that the plan was for participating USDA agencies to engage in a “fun competition,” and the winning team would be the agency which had the greatest percentage of its potential donors—to include agency employees plus their friends, relatives, and neighbors—to contribute. The winning team would then be announced at an “All USDA Family Picnic” to be held on July 12.

**Rosemary Watterud**, the office manager for APHIS's Plant Protection and Quarantine Office in Bismarck, reported that the weather on July 12 was warm and sunny, the USDA picnic took place, and NRCS won the blood drive competition. “We were told by United Blood Services personnel,” Lund recounted, “that they normally expect 10 percent participation when they go out to organizations with the Bloodmobile. USDA's participation was 25 percent.”

“We're planning to do this again next year—and this time we're aiming for more USDA activities held statewide,” Thorson affirmed. “So stay tuned.”

—**RON HALL**

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#### Award-Winning...continued from pg. 4

For *Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights*: the Centralized Servicing Center's Management Team (RD), St. Louis, Mo., **David Villano**, Group Leader; the eGrants Implementation Team (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service), Washington, DC, **Anthony Pandolfino**, Group Leader; the National Treasury Offset Program Work Group (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Lael Lubing**,

Group Leader; and the Peer Review Coordinating Council (Economic Research Service), Washington, DC, **Michael LeBlanc**, Group Leader.

For *Heroism and Emergency Response*: the Hurricane Relief Team (Office of Inspector General), Chicago, Ill., **Paul Keating**, Group Leader; and the Kisatchie Ranger District (FS), Provencal, La., **Mike Dawson**, Group Leader. ■

#### “Unsung Heroes”...continued from pg. 5

⑫ **Norma Valdes**, Chief of RD's Human Resources Program Branch, who, while serving earlier as an RD human resources specialist, developed and implemented RD's

new 5-tier Performance Plan, oversaw the alignment of all employment positions in RD with RD's Strategic Plan, and established a workforce/succession planning group for RD. ■



"There's nothing like a well-cooked 'USDA Week' hamburger," quips **Jane Grant** (left), the public information specialist for the Rural Development State Office in Bismarck, N.D., as she reaches for yet another one. **Tim Kuntz**, a farm loan officer with the Farm Service Agency County Office in Mandan, N.D., is serving with her as 'co-overseer' of the grill. The event, a picnic for USDA employees who work in central North Dakota, was part of "USDA Week"—July 9-13, 2007—a week that was proclaimed in writing by the state's governor and recognized throughout the entire state. How did USDA employees help to make this all happen? Note the story on page 6.—**PHOTO BY DENNIS RODIN**



## HELP US FIND **BOBIE SOUVANNARINH**

Missing: **8-19-2007** From: **Phoenix, AZ**

D.O.B. **3-13-1991** Sex: **Female**

Hair: **Black** Eyes: **Black**

Height: **5 ft.** Weight: **90 lbs.**

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### ■ October 31 to December 14

*Combined Federal Campaign*

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### ■ November 13-15

*USDA Forest Service 2007 Sustainable  
Operations Summit*

Denver, Colo.  
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[www.regonline.com/sustsummit](http://www.regonline.com/sustsummit)

### ■ Month of November

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